

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**Child and Family Services Agency**



**Administrative Issuance: CFSA-08-2**

TO: All CPS Staff

FROM: Audrey L. Sutton, Deputy Director for Program Operations

DATE: March 7, 2008

RE: Immediate Requirements for All CPS Investigations

---

The Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) Child Protective Services (CPS) Program is the first line of intervention for ensuring the safety and protection of children (under the age of 18 years) who have been maltreated (abused or neglected) or are at risk of maltreatment. CPS is responsible for investigating every allegation of child maltreatment that is reported, as well as responsible for conducting a comprehensive assessment of the immediate safety and risk of harm to each child in the family.

CFSA's Practice Model demands that investigative work take place with the utmost professionalism, a sense of urgency, and attention to details. All information gathered during an investigation is essential for CPS to be able to protect the child(ren) and to determine a plan of action for ensuring the child's ongoing safety, permanence, and well-being.

Outlined below are CFSA's current guidelines and expectations for all CPS investigations. *These required practices are effective immediately.* Note that the itemized efforts detailed in this issuance for making contact with a child and/or family are expected to take place concurrently. There shall be no time lag between steps. Further development of CPS practice standards will be incorporated permanently into CFSA Policy in the near future. Please thoroughly discuss these standards with all CPS staff.

As always, I will make myself available to answer any questions or concerns you or your staff may have.

1. It is mandatory for all CPS investigations to be initiated as soon as possible, but no later than 24 hours after receipt of the report.
2. If a report is prioritized for "Immediate Response", the investigation *must be initiated within 2 hours of receipt of the report.*
3. The initial home visit should be unannounced. Phone contact should not precede an unannounced home visit unless the victims have been seen.
4. Initiation of an investigation is considered to have been established when the CPS worker has made face-to-face contact with the child(ren) victim(s). Good faith efforts should be made to see the child(ren) not only in the home, but in school or daycare when applicable. *It is mandatory that the worker speak with the child(ren) out of the presence of parents, caretakers or alleged perpetrators, as well as siblings and/or other children.*
5. Conduct separate interviews of each of the children, assessing not only physical health, but also the emotional and behavior health of the children.

6. It is critical to assess any new allegations within the context of all previous reports and allegations. During the investigation, the CPS worker shall review all prior CPS reports (including inconclusive, Information and Referrals (I&R) and Additional Information) for the child, members of the household, and the alleged perpetrator. The CPS worker may also attempt to obtain and review law enforcement reports related to the child, members of the household and the alleged perpetrator, focusing on any reports of domestic violence, child abuse, or drug-related activity in the home.
7. Make diligent efforts to gain entry to the home. *If the family refuses to cooperate*, the CPS worker must complete all of the following as appropriate:
  - a. Contact CPS Supervisor immediately
  - b. Contact MPD for assistance
  - c. Contact CFSA's Office of General Counsel to determine whether a Pre-Petition Custody Order is appropriate
  - d. Convene a case staffing to determine plan of action
  - e. Complete Pre-Petition Custody Order, if appropriate
8. If the family is not at home, the following steps must be completed by the CPS worker:
  - a. Leave a notification letter in the family's primary language (if known) at the home, requesting contact within 24 hours. **(only for neglect reports)**
  - b. If the child is school age, make contact within 24 hours to interview the child at the neighborhood school or the school listed in the referral
  - c. If the child is not school age, make contact within 24 hours to interview the child at the daycare center listed in the referral
  - d. Interview neighbors, resident managers, or landlords to confirm the address or determine the whereabouts of the family. If family is no longer residing at the address, obtain a forwarding address when possible
  - e. Conduct *at least 2* additional home visits at different times with one of these visits taking place between the hours of 8pm - 8am
  - f. Send a *certified letter* to the last known address within 1 week of the referral date if the family fails to respond
9. *No investigation will be closed solely on the grounds that the child could not be located until thoroughly exhaustive efforts have been made by the CPS worker to locate the child and family. If the child or family cannot be immediately located, investigative efforts must be elevated and the following steps taken concurrently with a sense of urgency to thoroughly exhaust all avenues for locating the child and/or family:*
  - a. A *minimum* of three (3) unannounced home visits at different times within a 48 hour timeframe with at least one visit between the hours of 8pm - 8am
  - b. Use of Internet search engines such as <http://www.whitepages.com/>, <http://www.zabasearch.com>, and <http://www.freeality.com/>
  - c. Mailing of a certified letter, in the family's primary language, to the last known address, referral address, or address listed on the ACEDS and/or SPIS report
  - d. Contact with the reporter to obtain additional information on locating the child and family
  - e. Visit to the child/ren's neighborhood school or school if enrollment is known (or a request should be made to the DCPS Penn Attendance Intervention Center (202-541-6411) or Douglass Attendance Intervention Center (202-698-2461) if enrollment is unknown); *efforts should also be made to reach the emergency contact person on file with the school*

- f. Contact with the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) Truancy Officers to request assistance in gaining access to family (when allegations warrant and there has been involvement with the family)
  - g. Request that MPD check their database for any involvement with the particular family or address
  - h. Criminal background search of any known family members for access to addresses or other contact information
  - i. Referral to the Diligent Search Unit within 1 week if family has not responded and follow-up on the results of diligent search; *No report shall be closed without receipt and follow-up on diligent search results*
  - j. Interview neighbors, relatives, and other collateral resources
  - k. Confirm that the family is no longer residing in the residence (via landlord, property records or verified alternative residence)
  - l. Contact the Healthy Family Thriving Communities Collaboratives to determine whether the family is known to them or has received services from them (see attachment)
  - m. Consult with Assistant Attorney General (AAG) staff to determine if Pre-Petition Custody Order is warranted
  - n. Check with other governmental agencies for possible involvement, including the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Human Services, Income Maintenance Administration, etc.
10. **All** information must be documented in FACES within 24 hours of obtaining it, including date and time of all visits and attempted visits, and all good faith efforts to make face-to-face contact with the victim if initiation has not been established.
11. **All** past history used and considered during the course of an investigation needs to be documented in the record.
12. **NO** unable to locate investigation shall be closed without review and approval of the assigned Program Manager.

